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GREENOCK
AND ITS
EARLY SOCIAL
ENVIRONMENT
.
WILLIAM AULD . .

D 875.519



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"For Auld Lang Syne"

with J.C.'s Compliments

Nov. 1907







THE HARBOURS, 1812.

Greenock

and its

Early Social Environment

By

William Auld

PROCURATOR-FISCAL OF THE LOWER WARD
OF RENFREWSHIRE.

GREENOCK:
JAMES M'KELVIE & SONS, LIMITED,
1907.

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THE FOLLOWING PAGES FORM THE SUBSTANCE OF A
LECTURE DELIVERED BEFORE THE GREENOCK
PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY, ON THE 18TH JANUARY,
1907 (JAMES WATT ANNIVERSARY).

Greenock and its Early Social Environment.

Two hundred years ago, when the eighteenth century commenced to run its course, the city and hamlets on the banks of the Clyde began to feel the throbbings of a new life. The devastating wars of centuries had passed away, the distractions of the Covenantee times had been quelled, and by the Union with England, in 1707, the restrictive fetters, which had hitherto strangled our commerce, were broken asunder, thereby opening up a large and lucrative trade at home and abroad. If we could, in imagination, place ourselves on board one of the small vessels which then traded or fished on the Firth, we would see the villages of

EARLY SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT.

Greenock, Crawfurdsdyke, and Newark or New Port-Glasgow as it was then called, nestling at the foot of the hills, which were then, and for long afterwards, covered with rich wooding, and the lower ground with trees of smaller growth. We would also see the sandy bay and seashore stretching from Garvel Point to Whitefarland, with two smaller bays within its circumference—St. Lawrence, now Cartsdye, Bay, on the east, and the Bay of Quick, now the site of Princes Pier, on the west—and, intersecting these hills we would see the seven streams of Greenock leaping downwards, with their white waterfalls sparkling in the sun, while the only buildings that would meet the eye, besides a few thatched houses along the beach, would be the Castles of Easter Greenock, and Crawfurdsburn, the Old West Kirk by the burnside near the shore, and the Mansionhouse, the residence, for centuries,



THE CARTSBURN MANSION HOUSE.
SITE OF THE NEW CARTSBURN SCHOOL.

of the Shaw family. The inhabitants of Greenock were few in number, while the harbours were represented by a heap of whin stones for the shelter of the fishing boats. The river then rolled over its pebbly bed, a large sandbank extended outside its channel-way from Greenock to Dumbarton, while, between that town and Glasgow, the water was so shallow as to make it unavailable for vessels. It abounded in salmon, which, instead of being considered a luxury, as at present, became such a glut in the social economy of the time, that the farm servants petitioned the Council of Dumbarton to prohibit their masters from feeding them on it oftener than twice in each week. Glasgow, like Russia of to-day, was feeling its want of an outlet to the sea, to meet its growing commerce, and to this end had endeavoured to secure a foothold in Dumbarton, but the wise men there, refused to entertain the

proposal, on the ground that 'the influx of mariners would tend to raise the price of butter and eggs on the inhabitants,' and so Glasgow was forced to come further down the river, and found the settlement of New Port-Glasgow. Following on this, and fired by the growing prosperity of the new settlement, Greenock was not long in wakening up, and starting on its career of commercial pushfulness and prosperity, and this notwithstanding the long-continued and virulent opposition of the Royal Burghs of Scotland, who claimed the exclusive right of conducting all the foreign trade of the country. And here, it may be proper to indicate the chief factors which have been at work in the evolution of the town from its embryo state. These are (1) the breaking up of the Highland Clan system, following on the Rebellion of '45, (2) the revolt of our American Colonies, (3) the introduc-

tion of the Shaws' Water, and (4) the development of steam, following on the invention of the steam-engine by our great townsman, James Watt. But, leaving these general remarks, and making them, so far, the basis of what is to follow, we come now, more particularly, to look at the early social characteristics of our town, comparatively unknown, but at the same time of deep account, not only to the historian and the sociologist, but to all who have any interest in the good old town of Greenock. And, as the streams, having run their course, commingle their waters in the sea, so from the varied streams of the social life of the time, will we seek to draw our views of the past, which, uniting at the close, will, we trust, give us a clear idea of the manner in which our forefathers lived and moved and had their being.

I.—The Town and its Surroundings.

Sir John Shaw, who may be styled the Maker of Greenock, was one of those strong men whom Carlyle aptly designates as Captains of Industry. Early in the eighteenth century, watching with a seeing eye, the tide of commerce with America and the West Indies, and the possibilities of the town from its situation, he granted several favourable Charters of Rights to its inhabitants, and built, at his own expense, the town's first harbour, now known as the West Harbour of Greenock. In order to provide for its upkeep, he obtained an Act of Parliament authorising the levy of two pennies Scots on each pint of ale brewed in Greenock and the surrounding districts, and as this was the favourite beverage of

the period, the income must have amounted to a considerable sum. Previous to this, for the erection of Quays, there had been a voluntary assessment of one shilling and fourpence on every sack of malt brewed into ale in the town, but, not being compulsory, it did not work satisfactorily. To give, at a glance, the progress of the town during the past two centuries, it may be mentioned that the population, including Cartsdike, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, numbered 1,000—at the beginning of the nineteenth century, 17,000—and at the beginning of the twentieth century, 68,217. At the period immediately preceding the earliest of Sir John's charters, the town extended from the West Kirk to the Row-end, with several intervals between, and virtually consisted of what is now known as Shaw Street, then Laigh Street, and Dalrymple Street, then High Street. The

houses lined the shore, and most of them had special jetties of their own for boats, the Breasts—East and West—not having been then built. So improbable did it seem, even in the end of the eighteenth century, that the town would ever extend up the hill, that, when the Inverkip Street burying ground was contemplated, the inhabitants petitioned against it, because of the great toil involved in carrying their dead, for burial, to such an out of the way spot, and giving as their opinion that, if any future extension of the town took place, it would doubtless be only along the shore. The Vennel, running inwards, was one of the earliest off-shoots from the line of shore-side houses, designated in the early titles as the ‘road leading to Inverkip,’ and described in one of Lady Shaw’s letters as “a handsome street.” Gradually, Cathcart Street and Hamilton Street were added, connected with



LONGWELL CLOSE
NOW DUFF STREET.

the original streets by the still-remembered outlets of evil notoriety, Taylor's Close, with its annexe of Jib-boom Square, Drummer's Close, Longwell Close (from the long well 50 feet deep, whose situation is inscribed on a memorial stone in the centre of Duff Street), Harvie Lane, and others of the like nature, to say nothing of the numerous pen closes running from the low streets, of which the vilest was, undoubtedly, Mince Collop Close, opening from Dalrymple Street between William Street and Longwell Close. The romance of the streets would open up a field of research sufficient to form a lecture by itself, but we shall confine ourselves to those whose names throw some light on our special subject. Cross-Shore Street, in common parlance known as "The Cross-shore," where sales of pointed effects are still carried out, points us to the old Market Cross beside the shore, then marked by

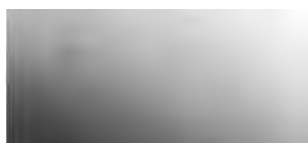
means of white pebbles gathered from the beach, imbedded in the roadway in the form of a cross. Charles Street was originally known as Herring Street, from one of the staple industries, the memory of which is still preserved in the herring barrels which appear in the Town's Coat of Arms, although it does not now include the not too poetical motto adopted by our ancestors, "Let herrings swim, that trade maintain." Virginia Street recalls the extensive imports of tobacco from Virginia, then a British Colony, while the West India sugar trade is commemorated by Jamaica Street, Tobago Street, Antigua Street, and Trinidad Place. The rule observed, when streets first began to receive distinguishing names, was that the right of nomenclature was given to the first feuar on the line of street, but, notwithstanding this rule, sometimes difficulties arose when two or more houses were being





MINCE COLLOP CLOSE.

OFF SHAW STREET, EAST OF WILLIAM STREET.



erected at the same time. The first house in Hamilton Street was built by a tailor, and the second by a smith, who oft were drunk for weeks together, and in their cups, and out of them, they indulged in heated arguments as to the name, the tailor desiring it to be called "Needle Street," while the smith contended for "Kettle Street." At length the Magistrates took the matter out of the hands of both disputants and called it Hamilton Street, after the Duke of Hamilton of the day, or, as some authorities maintain, after the Hamilton family, formerly proprietors of the lands of Finnart. A similar case of Scotch pugnacity over their respective trades, was that which occurred between a gardener and another smith, besides the one just mentioned. "You will admit," said the former, "that my trade maun be the oldest, for Adam was a gardener," to which his opponent dourly

answered, "But wha made his spade?"

The seven streams of Greenock, already referred to—four of them east of Cathcart Square, Lady Burn, Strone (now known as Craigieknowes) Burn, Crawford's Burn or Cartsburn, the Ling or Dailing Burn (now known as Dellingburn), on the east side, and the West or Kirk Burn, Finnart Burn (now known as Jardine's Burn), and the Glen Burn on the west—form an outstanding feature in the early social life of the town. It is interesting to read of smacks sailing into the West Burn, the Dailing Burn, and Crawford's Burn, far up into what is now, virtually, the heart of the town, and anchoring there—of the deep pools filled with trout—and of the heavy winter spates which caused the streams to overflow their banks, flooding the streets and all the lower parts of the town.

The Dailing Burn, which was one of the streams separating the town of Greenock



BROAD CLOSE.

from Cartsydyke, was spanned by wooden planks, often, as we see from the town's accounts, requiring to be renewed, and, for a considerable time, the place of these planks was supplied by a rudder of an old vessel. The West Burn was crossed by stepping stones at Brachelston Square—South Street being in consequence known till within recent years as Ford Road—also, by a bridge leading to the Old West Kirk, and, later on, when manufactures increased along the burnside, for it was indeed a very hive of industry, by two other wooden bridges. When the first Minister of the Relief Church, in the early years of the nineteenth century, took up his residence in one of the two old houses still standing on the south side of Union Street, near Fox Street, it was found to be so inconvenient that he was asked to live nearer the town, as he might be sent for in case of emergency

in the night time, which would be both difficult and dangerous with two streams, perhaps in flood, requiring to be crossed. It is related of some Greenock ladies who had been spending a social evening, of too festive a character, with some friends in Carttsyke, when returning home, and probably having already forded the Cartsburn and the Dailing Burn, they came to Cathcart Square, and seeing the shadow of the steeple across a clear sheen of moonlight, they naturally concluded that they had reached another stream, so, without more ado, they took off their shoes and stockings, 'kilted their coats,' and arrived safely on the other side!

As we have already observed, Greenock was rich in forests, which extended from the Mansionhouse to the top of the Whinhill, then part of the Shaw Estate Policies, and east and west along the hills and streams.



THE OLD MANSIONHOUSE.
SHEWING WELL OF 1828.

When the road to Port-Glasgow was being made, we read of its passage being cut through woods then growing down to the water's edge. The names of the districts surrounding the Mansionhouse are speaking evidence of their rustic character, the Deer Park, between the Dailing Burn and the Cartsburn, the Pond Park extending eastwards to the Dailing Burn, the Well Park, adjoining the Mansionhouse, where the quaint old Well, dated 1629, still stands, and the Crow Mount to the west of Bank Street, culminating at the point now occupied by Mount Park Church. Behind the Crow Mount, or in common parlance "The Mount," were the Thrushgrove Gardens, so called from the number and variety of the singing birds which frequented them, and along the base of the hill were numerous orchards, among others, one known as the Broomhill Gardens, on the

site now occupied by the Low Vennel. In 1785 it is chronicled that the nightingale, a most unusual bird in Scotland, was heard, for several years in succession, sending forth its glorious music from leafy groves on the spot where Buccleuch Street and High Vennel now stand. These sylvan retreats were greatly beloved by those whose 'fancy lightly turned to thoughts of love,' and many tender memories clustered round such names as those of the spots just mentioned, or of the Auld Kirk Road, the Lovers' Loan, the Back Walks, and the Lovie Wood,

"Where mony a summer e'en,
Fond lovers did convene,
In thae bonnie, bonnie gloamins
That are lang awa."



CROW MOUNT.

II.—The Business Life.

From the earliest times the business of fishing was the staple industry of the dwellers in Greenock and Crawfurdsdyke. The numbers of fish taken in the Firth of Clyde were, we are told, almost incredible, and they found a ready market at home and abroad, as ordinary food, and in connection with the dietary regulations of the Roman Catholic Church. By the middle of the eighteenth century not less than three hundred boats, known as "busses," were engaged in the herring fishing on the Clyde, one half of which belonged to Greenock, which industry not only gave employment to hundreds of fishermen, but to a whole auxiliary class of tradesmen, such as coopers, curers, packers, and others. Little could we

have imagined that immortality was to be found in such homely employment, but in this we were mistaken, as the following interesting extract from Crawford's History of Renfrewshire, published in 1782, will show. The author says, "the first red herrings that were ever made in Great Britain were made here [i.e. Gourock] by one Mr. Gibson, who may justly be styled *the father of trade of all the West Coast*, and his memory ought to be transmitted with reverence to latest posterity!" The fishing industry formed a splendid nursery for our mercantile marine, when it began to send its ships to the West Indies, the American Colonies, and Newfoundland. Whale fishing was also engaged in for a time, but proving unremunerative, the Greenock men gave it up, leaving it to be continued by Port-Glasgow. And here, we may mention a somewhat singular custom, which,

in course of time, gave rise to a good deal of trouble. Prior to 1773 shipmasters were in the habit of paying no wages to their crews till the vessel had passed the Cloch, on its outward journey, nor any, after rounding that point, on its homeward journey, which frequently caused loss to the men, and hardships to their families, as the vessel might be detained at the anchorage owing to unfavourable winds, or want of berthage accommodation at the Quays. In the year just mentioned the sailors of Greenock and Port-Glasgow stopped all ships in the harbours, and at the anchorage, and thus brought the trade of the Port to a complete stand still. The Magistrates sent for the military, who, in order to quell the riot, which was accompanied by mobbing and stone throwing, fired on the crowd, killing two women, and wounding others, both of women and men. The riot was only brought

to a close by twenty of the ringleaders being arrested and conveyed to Paisley Prison, but it sounded the death knell of the obnoxious custom which occasioned it. In the Napolenoic wars it used to be said that one volunteer was worth ten pressed men, and this remark was abundantly substantiated by the conduct of our townsmen. When volunteers were wanted here for land defence against threatened invasion, or for manning the privateers for defence of our commerce, men and money flowed in in abundance, but whenever the press-gangs ran our streets to capture men to serve in the Navy, the most desperate resistance was offered, the boat conveying them ashore being, sometimes, smashed to pieces by the crowd, and burned, while any one suspected of giving information to the press-gang, was taken down and ducked in the harbour, often to the danger of life. As showing, however, how our

forefathers rose to the occasion when danger threatened, to say nothing of their inborn love of gain, we would only mention the notable event, looking to the strict Sabatarianism of the time, which occurred on 15th July, 1777, being the day when the Communion was dispensed here, with all its old-world austerity and solemnity. Drums were beat through the town, calling for men to man three privateers required to protect some richly-laden Clyde-bound vessels, then due, which appeal was immediately responded to by sufficient numbers of hardy and capable men. Many of our sailors engaged in privateering, or on board our war ships, made considerable wealth from prize monies, which, in many cases, did them more harm than good. Thus, we read of one who received £1,800 as his share, but spent it all in debauchery in the course of two years, which no doubt hastened his end, as he died

soon afterwards, leaving his young children to be maintained by the Parish.

It is difficult for us, with our enormous ship-building yards on the Clyde, to realise that before the outbreak of the American War of Independence all ships of any size were built in America. But the loss of the United States to Britain was the gain to Greenock, and shipbuilding soon became one of its most important industries. Wealth and commerce increased, and the merchant princes of Greenock, who then had their houses in the High and Laigh Streets, and in the Vennel, became an all-powerful oligarchy, managing the town's affairs, as well as their own extensive businesses. With the suppression of the clan system, thousands of Highlanders flocked to Greenock to find employment on land or sea. Provisions, we are told, were very dear, particularly butter and milk, from the want of fertile arable land in the neigh-



OLD SLAUGHTERHOUSE LANE.
OFF LOWER ANN STREET.

bourhood, and coal was also expensive, as it required to be brought from the coalfields of Lanarkshire, by lighters. A butter or green market, and a flesh market, were established in Market Street, and a fish market at the Mid Quay, the last of which is made familiar to us in several well-known pictures of the time.

Time would fail us to enumerate the trades that sprang up—the bottle work in the East-end, whose cone was long a familiar object in the landscape; tanworks and a sugarhouse on the Cartsburn; and on the West Burn, a duck or sailcloth factory, a waulk or flash mill, glove and shoe factory, dye works, glue works, soap works, cooperages, sugarhouses, a distillery, a brewery, and others. By the impounding on the hills above the town, in connection with the Shaws' Water system, of a large quantity of water which formerly swelled the burns, these industries

lost a great deal of their old activity, and now the factories on the West Burn are 'a' weede awa', with the exception of the sugarhouse of Messrs. John Walker & Company.

In the old titles of Greenock we often find the word "Carman," which indicates one of that large body of men who drove long, low drays, carrying about fifteen hundredweight, laden with sugar, tobacco, or other produce, and which stood in rows along the quays waiting employment. Many of these men amassed considerable wealth, and built or acquired properties, while others, as we know from contemporary writers, wasted their substance in riotous living, neglecting their families and starving their horses. Of this latter class must have been the notorious *Archie Geachie*, who was currently reported to have been in the habit of putting a pair of green spectacles on his horse, and feeding it



THE OLD WEST BRIG,
BETWEEN KILBLAIN STREET AND PRINCES STREET.

with shavings, in order to delude the wretched animal into the belief that it was eating grass! Some of our townsfolk still living may remember another of the fraternity, *Tawtie Willie*, with his burly body and sonsy face, his Kilmarnock bonnet with large red tapitourie, and his whip with long lash attached, to reach the boys engaged in that occupation known to all young Greenock of that period as "scobing sugar." Trade societies, such as wrights, coopers, carpenters, weavers, tailors, and shoemakers, were the order of the day, who, with their banners and trade emblems, graced many a civic procession and demonstration, finishing up, usually, with a grand carouse at night. As shewing the drouthy habits of the day, we notice that in nearly all the accounts rendered to the Corporation or the Mansionhouse for work done, there is one item characteristically conspicuous, viz., the item charged as "drink money," sometimes

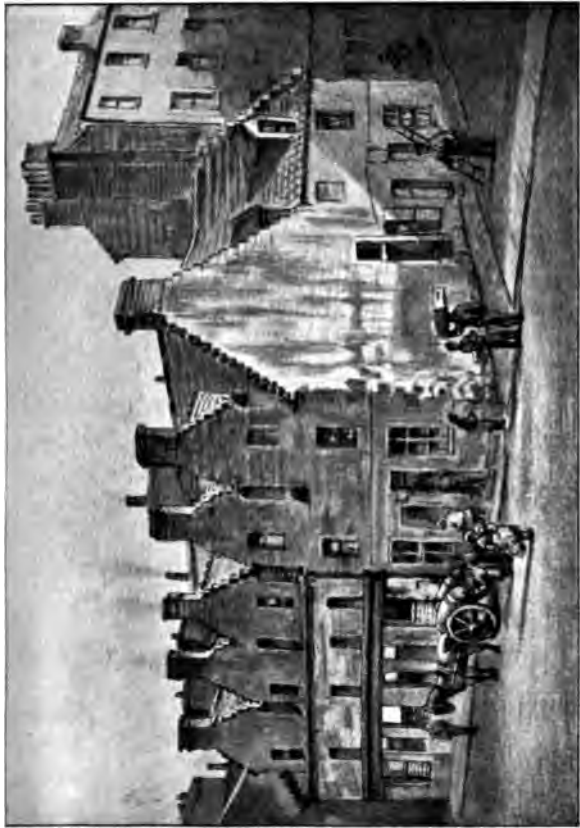
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more particularly specialised as “workmen's morning” or “four hours.”

III.—*Its Domestic and Social Life.*

Notice has already been incidentally taken of the great influx to the town of Highlanders, after Prince Charlie's Rebellion, but this was not by any means the first occasion of contact. Early in the 18th century the landless Macgregors, and their notorious leader Rob Roy, who in the language of our day would be known as "Undesirable Aliens," were in the habit of coming down to Greenock Fair (held then, as now, in the beginning of July), not for the purpose of seeing the shows and the merry-go-rounds, but in order to carry off the cattle, brought there in large numbers for sale. In order to put a stop to this practice, Sir John Shaw assembled his stalwart feuars and tenants, in each year when the Fair began, and marched them through the town,

where they acted as special constables for the protection of the lieges. The memory of this gathering was perpetuated till 1822, by an annual procession known as the "Riding of the Fair," when the various trades marched in procession, gaudily or fantastically attired, and bearing their trade emblems. As shewing how much our town was permeated by the Celtic element at the close of the 18th century, the Minister of the East Parish mentions, in a writing left by him, that a person might walk from one end of the town to the other, when the streets were crowded, without hearing anything spoken but Gaelic. Regarding the recently-imported Celts, he also quaintly remarks that many of them were very poor, but when spoken to on the subject they would, with the dignified pride pertaining to a long pedigree, admit that they were not so wealthy as their neighbours, but to compensate, and more than compensate, for this, they were of



THE HOUSE WITH FIVE GABLES,
DALRYMPLE STREET.
NOW OCCUPIED BY FIRE BRIGADE STATION.

very honourable extraction! Highland Close, Highlanders' Academy, and the Gaelic Parish Church, all remain as landmarks of the energy and solidarity of the Highlanders of that time.

The early houses built along the shore, as well as those erected at a later date, of which many specimens still remain (*e.g.*, on south side of Market Street, etc.), had their gable ends to the street, thus giving the town a more picturesque appearance than otherwise. In many of the gables was a small triangular window, close beside the fireplace, where, as the guiding star of home, the candle was placed, for the fishermen on the wintry nights, or for the encouragement of the mariner returning home from a foreign voyage. And doubtless, also, these small apertures served as a help to the thrifty housewives, when lighting their fires in the early morning, as the rays of the sun would beat upon the spot where they worked, and so save the candle

■

dip. They were an active and goodly race, these sailors' wives, and fortunately for them, and fortunately for us, they have found their poetess in Jean Adam, schoolmistress and needlewoman, Cartsdyke (born 1710, died 1763), who in her immortal song, "There's nae luck about the house," has given us such a vivid picture of their home life and surroundings :—

" And are ye sure the news is true ?

And are ye sure he's weel ?

Is this a time to think o' wark ?

Ye jauds ! fling by your wheel.

Is this a time to think o' wark,

When Colin's at the door ?

Rax down my cloak, I'll to the quay

And see him come ashore.

And give to me my bigonet,

My bishop's satin gown,

For I maun tell the Bailie's wife

That Colin's come to town.



My Turkey slippers maun gae on,
My hose o' pearl blue,
'Tis a' to please my ain gudeman,
For he's baith leal and true.

Rise up and mak' a clean fireside,
Put on the muckle pot ;
Gi'e little Kate her button gown,
And Jock his Sunday coat.
And mak' their shoes as black as slaes,
Their hose as white as snaw,
It's a' to please my ain gudeman,
For he's been lang awa'.

There's twa fat hens upon the bauk,
They're fed this month and mair,
Mak' haste to thraw their necks about
That Colin weel may fare.
And spread the table neat and clean,
Gar ilka thing look braw,
For wha can tell how Colin fared
When he was far awa' ?

And will I see his face again ?
And will I hear him speak ?
I'm doonright dizzy with the thought—
In troth I'm like to greet.

For there's nae luck about the house,
There's nae luck at a',
There's little pleasure in the house
When our gudeman's awa'."

Not only do we here see the intensity of love and devotion—"his very foot has music in't, as he comes up the stair"—but what a vivid glimpse is given to us of the manners and costumes of the time—the "bigonet," the linen cap or mutch, the satin and the button gown, the Turkey slippers—and in the home surroundings, the clean fireside, and the spinning wheel. Some have tried to rob Jean Adams of the honour of the authorship of this song, but the strong local colouring, and other points of internal evidence, all tend to give her the palm. From several other sources, too, we get a glimpse of the true home life of our forebears—their baptisms, weddings, and deathwakes—all which were great occasions for family gatherings and

social intercourse. But these meetings did not always meet with the approval of the rulers of the Kirk, for we find frequent entries regarding them in the Session minutes of the Old West Kirk, for a century and a half the only Church in the district, of which the following may serve as a specimen : “ The Session, taking into their consideration the great abuses committed by crowds of people frequenting lightwakes, and profanation of the Sabbath, by keeping banquets on that day, appoint the Elders and Deacons, in their several quarters, to take narrow inspection when any person die, that none be allowed to go and stay overnight where these lightwakes are, but such as are near friends and so concerned, and whom necessity may oblige to be present, that these spend the time by edifying discourse. Likewise, that persons having their children baptised on the Sabbath day, abstain from keeping banquets, and con-

vening people at such occasions, whereby much idle discourse and sin be evited." Penny weddings were also common, when the guests raised a sum to assist in giving the young couple a start in life, and in defraying the expense of the wedding. In order, therefore, to prevent abuse on these occasions, the Session enacted that "if any hereafter married persons have at their marriage above eight meases¹ of people on both sides, and use promiscuous dancing, they shall lose their consignation,² and this be intimate to them at the booking. Likewise these married persons are to guard against any other kind of abuse by excess in drinking or revellings."

In Greenock, as may be supposed, no water was introduced into any of the houses, but public wells with pump handles were

¹ MEASE.—A herring measure, varying in size in different localities. The size of the Greenock mease is unknown.

² Bail-money lodged when proclamations given in.

distributed throughout the town, besides which there were several deep draw-wells, the water from which was raised by means of a windlass and buckets. Neither were there any newspapers, or ladies' clubs, in those days, but the kirkyard before the church service, and the various wells, served as most efficient substitutes. These spots were dear to the female population, for there all the gossip of the place could be discussed—the births, the marriages, and the deaths—and probably, also, all the scandal too, for that, alas ! is not a perquisite of our more advanced civilization alone. You may remember the reply of the country lass, when remonstrated with for this apparent waste of time, “ I wadna gie the half-hour's cleck in the kirkyard for a' the psalms and sermons put thegither.” On one occasion, early in last century, when the dames and girls were assembled waiting their morning turn at one of the wells in town, a well-known

dissenting Minister passed, and noticing among the gossips a recently-married young wife connected with his congregation, without either shoes or stockings, gently rebuked her by saying, "Janet, you are neither wifelike nor wiselike this morning," at which she blushed, and mended her ways for the time to come.

But inculcated parties did not always take the rebukes of their ecclesiastical superiors in such good part, as we read of one John M'Farland (his wife Isobel M'Cun being absent through indisposition), who, on being censured by the Session for contracting what was deemed an irregular marriage, the proceedings not having been graced with the presence of the Minister of the Parish, when the sentence of the Presbytery having been read over, "expressed a great deal of insolence, by upbraiding the Session, and telling them if ever he had another opportunity of

marriage, he would not marry with any Minister now established, and that he would live with the said Isobel M'Cun, let the Devil and the sons of Belial do what they pleased." The Session, astounded at this outburst, agreed to hand this audacious rebel over to the Magistrates, to be dealt with in due course of law.

Another contumacious person — James M'Adam by name—who was charged with being "guiltie of horrid cursing and imprecation," while admitting the offence, seemed very "unsensible" of his sin. He was, accordingly, admonished "to forbear his drunkenness and tipplin', to which he is too much given, beside his horrid cursing and swearing," on hearing which, he had the temerity to excuse himself as being free from the same on the Sabbath day, and shamelessly insinuated that the same could not be said of some of the members of the reverend Court !

It is, however, to the lasting credit of these old worthies that, while strenuously looking after the morals and manners of their fellow-parishioners, they had a custom, at each Communion season, of carrying out a regular course of "privie censures" on themselves, each member being asked to retire in turn from the meeting, while the remaining members of Session investigated concerning the uprightness of his walk and conversation.

Owing to abundance of employment on sea and land, there were, in the town, very few dependent poor. The relief of the widows and orphans of seafaring men, and others left destitute, was met by church door collections, donations from ships' crews, Mariners' Societies, and Trades' Boxes, as well as from the hire of mortcloths, also marriage fees, and other small occasional sources of income. The "mortcloths" referred to were black biercloths hired out



THE OLD WEST KIRK.

by the Session, who were alone allowed to possess them, as coverings for the coffins when being carried, on spokes, from the residence of the deceased to the place of interment. They were not allowed to be given out unless the dues were paid, in advance, and these being somewhat high, many of the poorer people were glad to dispense with them altogether, till the Session reduced the dues to the sums following :—
‘ For the largest one, a groat; for the second, three shillings; for the other two little ones, two shillings Scots.’¹ These charges were doubled if the mortcloth was used out of the Parish, and, in addition, the hirer had to bear the expense of the man who went with it. When special respect was desired to be paid to any departed one, the church bell was rung at the funeral, on

¹ Scots shilling = one penny sterling.

Groat = $\frac{1}{4}$ of a penny sterling.

payment of forty shillings Scots, besides bellman's fee, and the same sum was exacted for the hire of the Communion cups to any neighbouring parish for sacramental occasions. Those who wished to be married in private, without coming to the church, were only entitled to this privilege, on production of a certificate by the Treasurer of the Session's fund, attesting that they had given in something for the use of the poor. This fund was also augmented by divers fines and charges levied on persons coming under discipline, or invoking the Session's aid in their private quarrels, such as would, probably, be adjudicated upon, at the present day, in the Small Debt Court. These suits so multiplied, and such manifold uneasiness was caused to the sorely burdened elders, that they found it necessary to enact that the complainer should consign ten groats ($3\frac{1}{2}d$) to be forfeited if the charge was

found not proven ! Many ships' crews, when in deadly peril at sea, would vow a gift to the poor, if their lives were spared. Thus, we read of a Session meeting where one, 'James Galbreath, Skipper, in Carsdyke, and Archibald Yuil, his mate, being present, informed the Session that they and company having been in eminent danger, on Feb. 6th last bypast, made a free will offering of nine pounds sterling, to be disposed of for behoof of the poor of this paroch, and having produced the forsd sum did desire the same to be distributed accordingly, and particularly, that some indigent persons named by themselves might be supplied in the first place out of the foresaid sum, which the Session undertook to do, and at the same time commended them for their pietie towards God and charitable disposition to the poor.' Besides these special thank offerings, the shipmasters and seamen of the

town, in order to shew their gratitude for mercies received, and their interest in the church itself, built, at their own cost, "A Loft in the South Yle of the Kirk," which is still known as the "Sailors' Gallery," and is indicated in the present Old West Kirk, as renovated, by a 20 gun frigate suspended over it.

As will have been noticed from some of the foregoing incidents, and, as is also made abundantly apparent in the literature of the period, the indulgence in liquor, on every possible occasion, was common among all classes of society. From the Town's Minute Book still in existence, we learn that the Magistrates and Council frequently held their business meetings in taverns and taprooms, not in one locality only, but in various places throughout the town. At the close of the school year, the Council was in the habit of entertaining in one of the well known licensed



THE ANCHOR INN,
SHAW STREET,
BETWEEN HIGHLAND CLOSE AND BRYMNER STREET.

howffs, the examining clergymen and also the schoolmasters, and in the tavern bills for these occasions we find charges for claret, negus, beer, porter, rum punch, bottles of Lisbon and mugs of porter for the guests, and allowances of liquor for the attendants and town officers. In 1792, when the population of Greenock was about 12,000, there were two hundred and forty-seven licensed houses in Greenock, exclusive of Cartsdyke,¹ while, with a population of about 70,000, we have now only 160 licensed premises, including Cartsdyke. The earlier Session records contain many interesting entries as to the prevailing vice of intemperance and the efforts put forth to combat the evil. Among others, it was

¹ "Every third or fourth door, in many places, has to the name of the occupant this appendage—'Licensed to deal in British and Foreign Spirits,' and the number of licenses annually granted for the town being, in 1825, 1,228."—*Weir's History of Greenock*.

provided that the bell should be rung every Friday and Saturday night at nine o'clock, to warn all sitting in taverns to repair to their houses, and the elders were appointed to see this duly carried into effect in their respective districts.

One day, in the early part of the 18th century, an alarming event in the moral history of the community was reported to the Session and is thus recorded in the Minutes:—"The Minister informed them that mountebanks having come to this place, had erected a stage for stage plays to be acted thereon, and proposed that they would fall on some effectual method for supressing the same, the Session considering the thing to be unlawful and inductive to much sin and looseness, appoint some of their number, to wit, James Craford, John Clark, and Thomas Watt [grandfather of James Watt] to go to the Doctor [i.e., the travelling



CORNER OF WILLIAM STREET AND DALRYMPLE STREET.
SITE OF JAMES WATT'S BIRTHPLACE.



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quack who ran the show], in name of the Session, and discharge him to use Rope-dancing, men simulating themselves fools, or women exposing themselves to public by dancing on the stage, or any undecent behaviour, allowing him only to expose his drugs or medicine to public sale."

We have already had occasion to mention, by name, two of Greenock's well-known "characters"—Archie Geachie and Tawtie Willie—but, there are many others worthy of a passing glance, some of whom may still be remembered, while the outstanding eccentricities of others have been inwoven in our minds with the nursery tales of childhood. The question naturally arises, Why are there no "characters" nowadays? Alas! the deadly monotony of our educational system brings all those of school age down to the dead level of the standards, and when they reach adolescence, and shew

any special mental idiosyncracies, they are, forthwith locked up, by the Parish Council authorities, in the enforced retirement of Smithston! But, these old notables of Greenock were, by no means, wanting in mental or bodily vigour, and, one at least of them, rendered good service, in her day and generation, to her native land. This was the patriotic *Mother Casey*, who, when the French invasion threatened, paraded the streets in a boat, seemingly propelled by oars rowed by stalwart seamen on board, while the virago waved the flag and called on her fellow-townsmen to come forward to the defence of the country, by which means a corps of five hundred men was raised, known at the time as "The Clyde Marine Volunteers." Our ancestors, also, seem to have had, intuitively, the happy knack of giving pithy nicknames, as has been done with such marked effect by Bunyan in the

Pilgrim's Progress and Carlyle in his *French Revolution*, which outline in vivid word-pictures the salient characteristics of those on whom they were conferred. What a volume of memories is recalled by, and what a picture gallery of incidents gather round, such well known names as those of *Heather Jock*, *Puddin' Jean*, *Scutcher*, *Mouly Dan*, *The Babes*, *Old Malabar*, *Burn-the-Bible*, *Tag-a-rag*, and *Robin-ring-the-Bell*! The first named of these, *Heather Jock*, was a strolling musician, who wandered the streets carrying a bunch of heather, and singing his melodies, in a high falsetto voice, to his admirers who formed a circle round him. His favourite song was "Annie Laurie," and, as he uttered the closing lines, in long drawnout, agonised tones,—“And for bonnie Annie Laurie, I wad lay me doon and dee”—he fell to the ground, and lay prostrate on his back. *Puddin' Jean*, a

long-remembered beggar arrayed in a black cloak, under which she concealed the cold "tawties" and other edibles gathered from the charitably disposed, in her daily rounds. when, finally, removed to the Poorhouse, was found to have concealed, in the folds of her cloak, about £150 in money and Bank Deposit Receipts, her unsuspected savings! *The Angel Gabriel*, whose true name was John Sayers Orr, was an eccentric and picturesque-looking, anti-Popish lecturer, who, declaring himself to be the Angel Gabriel, carried a lantern and a trumpet, the latter of which, till lately, adorned the walls of a doctor's house in Montreal. When he wished to gather an audience, he blew his trumpet, long and loud, which at once had the desired effect, and his harangues were delivered with such impassioned eloquence and fell on such inflammable material, that serious riots ensued throughout.



the town, followed by considerable destruction of property. On one remembered occasion he chose as his text, the last clause of Matthew xxii. 40: "Hang all the law and the prophets." And, speaking of riots leads us to notice the last name on the list, *Robin-ring-the-Bell*. He was the officer engaged to ring the curfew bell of the Mid Parish Church, at ten o'clock every night. On one occasion the town was in a riotous mood, and danger being apprehended when darkness fell, the Magistrates arranged that, if any outbreak took place, the bell was to be rung immediately, to warn the peaceably disposed citizens, and to summon the marines and bluejackets from the guardship to assist in quelling the disturbance. When night came on, some wags got hold of Robin, and having esconced him in the cosy parlour of a changehouse, put his watch an hour forward. As nine o'clock drew on, Robin

looked at his treacherous timekeeper, seized his hat and rushed to perform his wonted duties, first locking the doors of the church behind him, according to custom. When the clang of the bell was heard, the citizens came forth in their thousands, armed with sticks and batons, and thronged to the Square, ready to defend their hearths and homes from the non-existent rioters! But space will only allow of us describing one more of that strange band of old Greenock worthies, *Tag-a-rag*. He was a quay porter, and much addicted to drink. On one occasion, having "broached the admiral" at the Old Steamboat Quay, he was carried home as one dead. The corpse was duly dressed and coffined, the candles were lighted and a wake organised and kept up all night, with the usual bacchanalian ceremonies. Previous to his supposed death, *Tag-a-rag* had been engaged to attend to the Liverpool boat

early on the following morning. As it neared the quay, it sounded its whistle, which roused the *dead* man from his torpor, and he forthwith cast off the cerements of the dead and proceeded to fulfil his engagement! From that day, however, he was a changed man, and became an active worker in the temperance cause.

The sanitary condition of the town, as we now understand the term, was in a deplorable state, and epidemics of fever and smallpox were of frequent occurrence. One man writing at the close of the 18th century says, "It must surprise a stranger to observe that in a seaport where the tide flows at a medium of ten feet, perpendicular, meeting several rivulets, the slaughterhouse should send, chiefly by means of pumped water, all its blood and filth through the greatest breadth of the town." The fever zone extended from Inverkip Street to the sea,

following the course of the West Burn, and along the streets between the main streets and the river. This state of matters continued till about forty years ago, when, by the death, within a few weeks of one another, of five doctors, all in the prime of life, the public conscience was aroused and the Improvement Trust, about ten years later, swept away most of these hotbeds of disease. In the autumn of 1786, a young man, an apprentice carpenter, living either in Shaw Street or Charles Street, for tradition varies on the subject, was struck down by fever, and was tenderly nursed by his sister from Argyllshire, then temporarily resident in Greenock. But her devotion cost her her life, and on 20th or 21st October she passed away at the early age of eighteen, her mortal remains were followed to the grave by a few tradesfolk, and were laid to rest in the Old West Kirk Yard, 'earth to

earth, ashes to ashes, and dust to dust.' How many hundreds before, and since, her day, have thus found their last resting place there, but of whose names not the faintest echo remains. But the news of her death was carried to a young Ayrshire farmer, Burns by name, to whom she had plighted her troth, five months before, and while the poignant arrow of grief entered his soul, it at the same time gave immortality to Highland Mary. As the anniversary of her death drew on apace, a deep sadness overtook him, and he was observed to wander, solitary, on the banks of the Nith, all night, till approaching dawn wiped out the stars one by one from the firmament. When, at last, he entered his dwelling his impassioned soul found vent in the immortal lines "To Mary in Heaven."

"Thou lingering star, with lessening ray,
That lov'st to greet the early morn,

Again thou usherest in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.
O Mary ! dear, departed shade,
Where is thy place of blissful rest ?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid ?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast ?"

And then, recalling the fond meeting and sad
parting, he pens those ever-memorable lines :

" Still o'er these scenes my memory wakes,
And fondly broods with miser care ;
Time but the impression deeper makes,
As streams their channels deeper wear."

And so the depths of human love, touched by
the living fire of genius, have given Mary
Campbell a place among the immortals, and
made the Old West Kirkyard of Greenock
the Mecca of pilgrims from all parts of the
world.



HIGHLAND MARY'S GRAVE.

IV.—Its Ecclesiastical and Educational Life.

Prior to the Reformation, there seems to have been three small chapels in Greenock, supervised from the Abbey of Paisley—one at Kilblain dedicated to St. Blane, a Chapel of St. Laurence near Virginia Street, and one at Chapelton on the road to Port-Glasgow—but when that event took place, they were all either demolished or allowed to decay away and disappear. The inhabitants of Greenock from that time onwards were intensely and rigidly Presbyterian, and no Roman Catholic church found a footing in the district till 1815. We find incidental evidence from time to time of their hatred to the Papacy. Thus, in the year 1781, the townsfolk sent a subscription

of fifty pounds towards the defence of that erratic nobleman, Lord George Gordon, concerned in the "No Popery" riots in London, and a few years later they voted to the fund then being raised for erecting the Mid Kirk steeple the balance of subscriptions previously collected for opposing a Catholic Emancipation Bill in Parliament. After the little chapels were given up, the people of Greenock had to walk for worship to Inverkip, or, as it was then called, "the Village of Daff." And here we find the origin of the name we have already had occasion to mention, the Auld Kirk Road, which, after the lapse of nearly four hundred years, still clings to the Inverkip Road. The inconvenience was found to be so great, that Greenock Parish was disjoined from the Parish of Inverkip in 1589, and two years later the Old West Kirk was opened for public worship. This continued to be the



BOTTLEWORKS (LOOKING WEST), 1811.



only parish church in Greenock till the Mid Kirk was erected in 1761, to be followed thirteen years later by the East Parish Kirk, whose original situation was at the foot of Bogle Street. No clock or church steeple existed in Greenock till the Mid Kirk steeple was built, as just mentioned, the time of day being indicated by a sundial on a house at the corner of Cross-shore Street and Shaw Street. This house, from which the stage coaches started for Glasgow, in their ordinary runs, is still in good condition, and bears above its front door the date 1716, being the year of its erection. The original and only bell in town was erected on triangles at the Royal Close, where Ewing's Buildings in Rue-end Street now stand, within what was known as "the timber steeple;" but the triangle having become dilapidated through lapse of years, the bell was removed to a small steeple erected above the town cellars, facing the

West Harbour, beside what has since been known as the Bell Entry.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century there were in Greenock, besides the three churches just mentioned, the Gaelic Parish Church, opened shortly before that date, and three Secession Churches of various subdivisions. For, as is well known, Scotland at that time was a perfect witches' cauldron, ecclesiastically, with its Auld Kirk, and the Secession divided into Auld Lights and New Lights, Burgher and Anti-Burgher, and besides these, Cameronians, Baptists, Methodists, Independents, and several others. In 1806 another sect started in Greenock—the Relief—which was considered the most advanced of all the religious bodies, both politically and ecclesiastically. The Superior of Greenock, in order to show his abhorrence of its tenets, inserted in his Charters a clause prohibiting the ground



THE BELL ENTRY.
FACING WEST HARBOUR.



feued from being used as “a Playhouse, *Church of Relief*, soap and candle work, tanwork, glass and bottle work, or any other kind of nuisance whatever,” while the rival Kirks, with true Christian politeness, dubbed it “The Jawbox Kirk.” A glimpse, in passing, at the origin of three Greenock Churches, all of different denominations, gives us an interesting sidelight on Church life in the olden time.

I. THE GAELIC PARISH.—Reference has already been made to the great immigration of Highlanders into Greenock towards the middle and end of the eighteenth century, and, in order to meet their spiritual necessities, the Magistrates granted them the use of the Mid Parish Church for a Gaelic service on Sunday evenings, but this privilege was withdrawn, on complaint by the regular worshippers, who alleged that the church seats were being dirtied by the dripping of candle

grease, and otherwise. In these circumstances steps were forthwith taken to provide the mountaineers with a church of their own, which still stands in West Burn Street, as originally erected, although now somewhat modernised in appearance.

2. THE BURGHER SECESSION, now Greenbank United Free, Church, originally met in a tent erected on a large green behind the Town Hall, and after various migrations the congregation built a church at the corner of Inverkip Street and West Shaw Street, long known as the "Cannister Kirk" from its style of architecture, and which now forms part of the fever wards of the Greenock Infirmary.

3. THE RELIEF KIRK, now known as Sir Michael Street United Free Church, had its origin in the meeting together of a few men, in the back room of a change house in Market Street, when, as the result of their



EAST QUAY LANE.

NOW BRYMNER STREET.

LOOKING TOWARDS THE CALEDONIAN RAILWAY STATION.

deliberations, they resolved to build a church and call a minister, which they accordingly did, and erected on the present site, a church capable of holding twelve hundred people, which was not long of being completely filled. At the small historic gathering just mentioned the assembled company had only ten pence half penny among them, but whether this was before or after the refreshments were paid for tradition sayeth not! While the church was building, the infant congregation met for public worship in a disused circus at the foot of Sugarhouse Lane. This meeting in a change house to form a congregation may be considered by us as somewhat out of place, but we know that ecclesiastical affairs were most frequently transacted in similar places, and it may be mentioned, in corroboration of this, that the bonds issued by the Council, for the expense of building the Mid Kirk, were

signed in what was then known as "M'Dougall's Tap Room," in William Street.

From what has already been said as to the strict Presbyterianism of the town, it follows, as a matter of course, that breaches of the Fourth Commandment bulk largely in the old Session Minutes, from which records these glimpses of the old life of our town have been largely drawn. In the Minutes we find notices of women placed under Session discipline, for alleged breaches of that commandment, by carrying water (in one case the accused pleaded that it was a work of necessity, being for a sick cow), another for cutting kail, another for carrying a bundle of pease, another for selling bread to a young maid (both buyer and seller being rebuked in this case), and another, for entertaining idle company, and setting ale to them in the hours of Divine worship. The cutty-

stool on which delinquents under Session discipline were compelled to sit, in presence of the assembled congregation, while rebuke was being administered, still forms part of the ecclesiastical furniture of our Old West Kirk. As for the men, notwithstanding frequent admonition anent observing the Sabbath day, we find that they continued 'vaging in the streets and fields, and gathering in companys in yards, and at the harbour heads in both towns' [i.e., Greenock and Crawfurdsdyke], and the Session accordingly ordained that 'two Elders, attended by one of the Town Officers, should go through the two towns in the forenoon, and other two in the afternoon services, and give an account of any they found vaging or walking disorderly.' Many delinquents were brought under discipline by means of this roving commission, or other ecclesiastical inquisition—one man for remaining in his

boat on the Lord's day, while another unfortunate wretch is censured for 'leading turf from the moor so soon on Monday morning, by break of day, that the same could not be done without breach of Sabbath, the night having been of the shortest when he did it,' and so on in endless variety. Even children were dealt with. Thus, we find one, Robert Hamilton, being brought before the Session, 'and not being able to give any satisfying reason for, or account of, his staying in the boat, received a Sessional rebuke, and was dismissed with a certification, if ever he be found doing so hereafter, he shall be censured more severely, and its ordered James Craford [Elder] apply in name of the Session to Sir John Shaw, or his Bailiff, that some corporal punishment may be inflicted on him, to the terror of others; and his father being present is admonished to take care his children observe the Sabbath better in



time to come.' But we know that these cases were the exception, for as late as 1798, the minister of the East Parish reports that the number of those who have entirely separated themselves from the Church is by no means great, and that in going along the town at nine o'clock on Sabbath evening, family worship, accompanied by singing of psalms, could be heard from every house, and from all the boats in the harbour, or anchored along the quays.

There was no Parish School in the town, but the Magistrates supported, by contributions, various public schools, while other schools were conducted by the churches, some by private enterprise, and others by well-known philanthropists, such as Alan Ker, and at a later day, Thomas Fairrie. Greenock also seems to have been a pioneer of free education, as in the first quarter of the 19th century, we

find a *free* school in Ann Street, supported by voluntary contributions, and educating six hundred children. When Lord Eldon presented a petition to the House of Lords signed by five thousand inhabitants of the town against Catholic emancipation, he remarked, "that this was a proof of education in Scotland, and in particular of Greenock, that in a petition so numerous signed, the signatures were all well written, and only three marks." Sunday Schools were started in Greenock in the closing years of the 18th century, about the same time as that in which the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland saw fit to issue a pastoral letter warning their people against giving countenance to religious societies, missionary associations, itinerant preachers and Sabbath Schools, which, it was alleged, were conducted by ignorant persons, altogether unfit for such an important charge, notoriously disaffected to

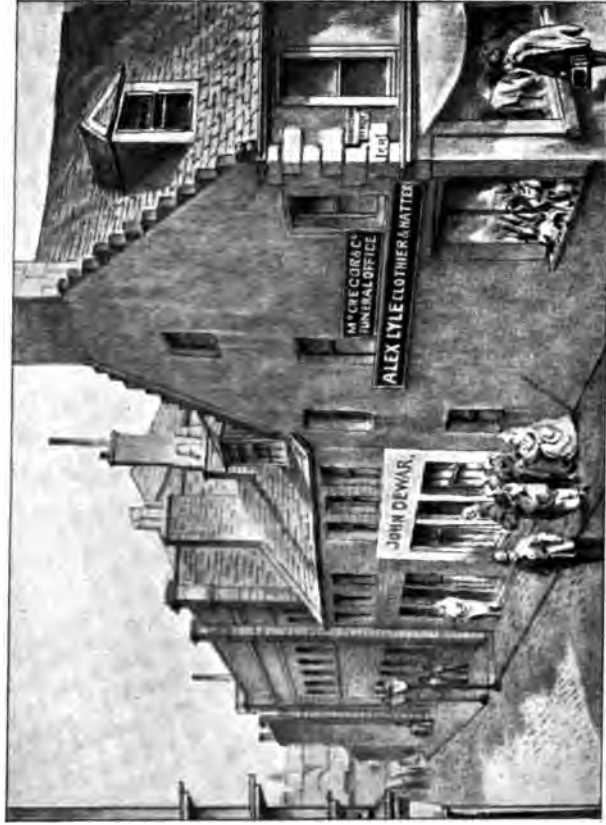
the civil authorities of the country, and frequently taking the liberty of censuring the character, or the doctrine, of the minister of the Parish. Those in Greenock who were bold enough to engage in the work of Sunday School teaching, were summoned before the Sheriff in Paisley—there being no resident Sheriff Substitute here till 1815—to explain their conduct and to take the oath of allegiance to His Most Gracious Majesty King George the Third! Our local rulers, however, seemed to have entertained no dread of the new movement, for in 1788 we find the entry in the Minutes of the Town Council of two guineas, and two years later five guineas, as having been paid from the town funds to a Mr. Sage as an encouragement to him to give attention to his Sunday School.

V.—Its Corporate Life.

Having thus surveyed the life of our forefathers, so far as affecting their individual relations, we now take a brief glance at the corporate life of the community. The town was originally incorporated into a Burgh of Barony by Charter from Sir John Shaw, and its privileges were further defined and extended by several later charters, extending down to the middle of the 18th century. The management of affairs was vested in nine persons—two Bailies, six Councillors, and a Treasurer—who were elected annually by the feuars and sub-feuars whose titles were duly completed according to law. The election lasted six days, and the electors had not only the nomination of their rulers,

but their votes also designated those whom they desired to be Bailies and Treasurer. Such a democratic constitution was almost completely unknown in any part of the country, as the other Town Councils were mostly close and secret corporations, entirely self-elected, and without any popular control or oversight. Our genial townsman, John Galt (born 1779—died 1839), thus satirises the usual mode of election prevalent in his day. “I remember,” he says, “that the Town Council, the Lord Eglinton that then was, then being Provost, took in the late Thomas Bowet to be a Councillor. As Thomas not being versed in election matters, yet minding to please his Lordship, for, like the rest of the Council, he had always a proper veneration for those in power, he, as I was saying, consulted Joseph Boyd, weaver, who was then Dean of Guild, as to the way of voting, whereupon Joseph, who was a discreet man,

said to him, 'Ye'll just say as I say, and I'll say what Bailie Shaw says, for he'll do what my Lord bids him.' " But even the more advanced constitution of Greenock did not seem to satisfy the satirist, for, having a grudge against the Magistrates, he perpetrated a joke against them which sticks to our town till the present day, and will probably do so for all time. In appointing a schoolmaster named John Wilson, the author of "Clyde, a poem," to one of the schools in town, it is generally told to their discredit, that the Magistrates of the day made it a condition of his appointment that he should give up 'the vain and unprofitable art of poem-making.' In his autobiography Galt, referring to the origin of the phrase, which he himself had invented, says : " I had nothing in view save a fling at the boss-headed bailies ; " but the person to whom the information was sent, took the phrase as



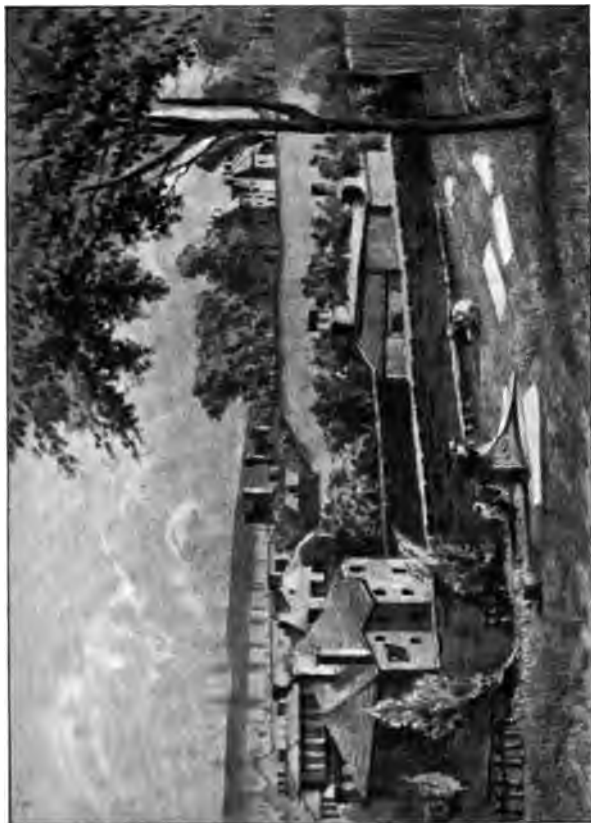
TAYLOR'S CLOSE AND OLD POLICE BUILDINGS.



an actual statement of fact, and published it to the world accordingly.

The Magistrates originally held their Courts in a wooden shed, where William Street now stands, which served the threefold purpose of a Town Hall, a Post Office, and a fire-engine station, the firemaster being recompensed by the munificent salary of thirty shillings a year. The first Town Hall was built in 1766 in Hamilton Street, on part of the ground where the present Municipal Buildings now stand, but, as may be supposed, it was a building of a very humble appearance. The first Police Station was a thatched house in the Broad Close, and thereafter the donjon keep or "masseymore" below the Mansionhouse was used till 1765, when the Police Station was incorporated as part of the town buildings. But, as showing the insignificance of the Police establishment, it is amusing to read that the constabulary force

in 1802 consisted of a jailer, whose salary was £31, and three town officers, who were each to receive a salary of £16, payable half-yearly, besides a suit of clothes and a cocked hat! Outside the earlier police station, and also at the West Quayhead, were fastened "the joughs," or iron collars, for the temporary detention of refractory persons, some of whom, on conviction, were placed in the pillory, where the passersby might play Aunt Sally, by throwing at them rotten eggs, vegetables, and other missiles; while hardened offenders were banished from the town, by tuck of drum, under pain of transportation should they return. Public whippings of criminals were of frequent occurrence, and we are told that large crowds of idle persons gathered to witness the operation, which was performed in Cathcart Square after it was made. Owing to the increase of the town it was found necessary that, in addition to a Police



VIEW FROM SHAW PLACE,
SHEWING WELL PARK AND OLD JAIL.

Station, a jail or Bridewell should also be erected, which was accordingly done in the year 1810, behind the Mid Parish Church, and which was swept away by the construction of the Gourock Railway in 1886.

VI.—Later Industrial Developments.

We should liked to have referred to the Radical riots of 1820, when the jail was mobbed and the prisoners released ; to the loss of the steamer " Comet " off Gourrock in 1825, when sixty lives were lost ; to the Cartsdyke floods in 1815 and again in 1835, caused by the bursting of Beith's Dam ; to the nearly successful assassination by shooting of the Town Clerk, and many other interesting local events, but these are not only beyond our scope and limits, but those interested in them will find them duly chronicled in the pages of the *Greenock Advertiser*, our first local paper, which was started in 1802. At the outset we mentioned as three of the leading factors in the evolution of Greenock, the invention of the steam



THE FIRST PASSENGER STEAMBOAT, "THE COMET."
BUILT BY HENRY BELL.

engine, the deepening of the Clyde, and the introduction of the Shaws' Water, and we cannot do better than conclude this sketch of the manners and customs of Old Greenock, than by giving the following short extract from the *Advertiser* regarding (1) the first steamer on the Clyde, which took five hours to make the run between Greenock and Glasgow, and (2) the installation of the Shaws' Waterworks.

In the *Greenock Advertiser*, of 15th August, 1812, the following interesting advertisement appears :—

“STEAM PASSAGE BOAT, THE ‘COMET,’¹
Between Glasgow, Greenock, and Helensburgh,
for Passengers only.

THE Subscriber having, at much expense,
fitted up a handsome Vessel to ply upon the

¹ This was the first passenger steamer. Her dimensions were as follow :—Length, 40 feet 6 inches ; 30 tons burden. Built for Henry Bell, by Messrs. John Wood & Co., Port-Glasgow.

River Clyde, between Glasgow and Greenock—to sail by the power of Wind, Air, and Steam—he intends that the vessel shall leave the Broomielaw on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, about mid-day, or at such other hour thereafter as may answer for the state of the tide, and to leave Greenock on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, in the morning to suit the tide.

The elegance, comfort, and speed of this Vessel require only to be proved to meet the approbation of the public; and the Proprietor is determined to do everything in his power to merit public encouragement.

The terms are, for the present, fixed at 4/- for the first Cabin, and 3/- the second, but beyond these rates nothing is to be allowed to servants or any other person employed about the Vessel.

The Subscriber continues his Establishment at Helensburgh Baths, the same as for years past; and on the 'Comet's' arrival at Greenock a vessel will be in readiness to convey any

Passengers that intend visiting Helensburgh.

Passengers by the 'Comet' will receive information of the hours of sailing, by applying at Mr. Thomas Stewart's, Bookseller, Square ; and at Mrs. Blackly's, East Quay-head, Greenock, or at Mr. Houston's Office, Broomielaw.

HENRY BELL.

HELENSBURGH BATHS,
5th August, 1812.

In the *Advertiser* of 17th April, 1827, a lengthened notice of the installation of the Shaws' Water appears ; and if the style of the reporter seems somewhat bombastic, we must ascribe it to his overstrained emotions on the occurrence of an event so momentous, increased, mayhap, by the excellence of the wines indulged in at the festivities held in the evening. He says : " Yesterday, precisely at a quarter to twelve, the sluices were raised by our Chief Magistrate, William Leitch, Esq., who immediately thereafter

entered a boat prepared for the purpose, gaily decorated with flags, and was floated along on the first tide of the stream in its new artificial channel. The spectacle of a vessel skirting the mountain brow, and tracking the sinuosities of the Alpine chain at so great an elevation, seemed a realisation of a dream of the wildest fancy, and the course of the boat was followed by crowds of delighted spectators. It arrived at Everton, in the vicinity of the town, exactly at a quarter to three, where it was received with cheers and a salute of cannon."

Sir Michael Shaw Stewart performed the ceremony of opening the lower falls, where, our reporter tells us, that "the torrent bounded down each successive fall, and rolled along the alternate levels with fearful activity. . . . an impetuous torrent, by turns a cascade, sending up clouds of spray, and a swift, rolling current seeking its



HARBOURS AND MID PARISH CHURCH, 1812.

unquiet course towards the Clyde, whose ample waters lay far beneath ;” and so on from stage to stage till, “at half-past four, the Shaws’ Water, which for ages had discharged itself into the Clyde at Inverkip, now terminated its easterly course in the River above the town !”

Conclusion.

We have now followed the various streams of human life referred to at the outset; we have seen the daily life of our townsfolk, in their business and domestic relations; and we are, therefore, in a position to realise how much our present environment has been effected by their lives and actions. We have been interested in, and perhaps amused at, their mode of life, so different in many ways from our own, but we can never forget that it is to these men of old, who performed the pioneer work, that we owe our present privileges and commercial success :—

“The heavenly dumb who did their deed,
And scorned to blot it with a name;
Men of the plain heroic breed,
Who loved Heaven's silence more than fame.”

